

**STATEMENT BY MR VITALIE MUNTEAN, UNDP
RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE ai
at the GAMBIA GOVERNMENT-UNDP ANNUAL
PROGRAMME REVIEW MEETING
23RD APRIL 2008.**

Mr. Chairman

Secretary General of the Government and Head of the
Public Service

Senior Government Officials

Esteemed representative of Implementing Partners

Project and Programme Managers and staff

Members of the press

UNDP colleagues

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

First and foremost I want to take this opportunity to warmly welcome you all to this auspicious gathering. We have been looking forward to this meeting as it is the main forum we have to review the previous year's results and together endorse the key areas and targets for programme intervention in 2008. It is important that we continue to engage in reflecting and examining our cooperation framework, whilst seeking evidence of what is being achieved in terms of results and lessons learnt in order to further improve our performance towards a successful implementation of the 2007-2011 Country Programme Document (CPD).

2007 was indeed a very challenging year, but I am happy to note that we have been able to surmount these challenges and took significant steps that allowed us to provide support to key national development priorities. Most importantly, we have held key consultations and policy dialogues with relevant stakeholders, culminating in the signing of the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), which is a five-year framework defining mutual cooperation between the Government of The Gambia and the United Nations Development Programme for the period 2007-2011. The CPAP defines all UNDP interventions in The Gambia and is anchored within two main programme areas namely: (a) *Poverty Reduction and Achieving the MDGs* and (b) *Governance and Human Rights*.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the period under review one of the greatest challenges was to set in motion the operationalization of the new CPAP for 2007-2011. In partnership with the government and other stakeholders in a relatively short period of time we managed to develop and kick-start the implementation of 7 programme interventions, which along with the projects initiated at the tail-end of 2006, enabled us to achieve notable progress in terms of development results, fostering partnerships and resource mobilization. Amongst the most noteworthy achievements I wish to mention the assistance provided to the IEC to put in place systems and processes for effective conduct of the National Assembly and Local Government elections and participation of CSOs in voter education and monitoring and observation of elections, strengthening the capacity of the NAS and support groups of PLWHA, enhancing the oversight functions of the National Assembly, and raising the awareness on the social benefits of women in leadership through a nation wide sensitization campaign and capacity assessment.

Of equal significance was the support provided in finalizing the MDG-based Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) leading to successful Round Table Conference to mobilize resources for an accelerated implementation of the PRSP. In addition to this, much effort was made in establishing the National Planning Commission. As part of the interventions in support of pro-poor policies, the Fight Against Social and Economic Exclusion (FASE) project has strengthened community responses to poverty, promoted the participation of the poor and development of pro-poor policies with a special focus on women groups. In the absence of legal and policy framework for disaster management, support has been provided to Government leading to the development of a National Disaster Management Policy outlining strategies and approaches that is already beginning to build a culture of safety through capacity development at all levels.

You will be pleased to note that substantial amount of funds were mobilized from UNDP thematic trust funds and bilateral donors to support the Country Programmes. The Joint Basket Fund established through cost-sharing agreements between the UNDP, EC and DfID to support elections has proven to be an effective mechanism for resource mobilization. With the support of the Spanish Government, a large amount of resources has now been mobilized for public sector reforms and implementation of the National Employment Action Plan. These efforts have contributed to practically a two-fold increase in the quantum of resource being made available to support our development interventions in 2008.

We have also taken steps to strengthen the UNDP Country Office capacity to carry out the CPAP implementation through a change management process and this has

assisted in sharpening focus on our comparative advantages in fostering good governance and poverty reduction to achieve the MDGs, whilst taking into account the benefits of enhanced work processes and results based management. Regular meetings with implementing partners and a training seminar on NEX have been undertaken to ensure quality assurance of interventions by both UNDP Country Office and project counterparts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Notwithstanding the progress made so far we do realize that much more needs to be done in order to successfully achieve the development objectives set in the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP. We will continue in consultation with Government to take further steps to fast-track recruitments, achieve quick turn-around time for disbursement of funds to support project/programme activities whilst seeking to enhance capacity for the implementation of the Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT). Most importantly we must enhance the oversight and coordination framework at both CPD/CPAP and programme/project levels. This is critical to ensuring that UNDP's interventions indeed correspond to the development objectives of The Gambia and ultimately produce the desired development results. We need to ensure that respective oversight/coordinating mechanisms are in place and function effectively for the successful management of development interventions. To this effect apart from mainstreaming the role of the Project Steering Committees we should also consider establishing a Country Programme Board which will act as the main policy setting, coordinating and oversight body that would provide leadership and guidance on CPD/CPAP implementation. We also look forward to hearing your perceptions of the independent assessment of the first year of the CPAP implementation which provides the necessary impetus to our

joint efforts for transparency, accountability and results based management. This will no doubt help us to devise a comprehensive and cohesive way forward on further improving CPAP implementation and set our targets for 2008.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude my brief statement by expressing our sincere gratitude to the Office of the President – UNDP's National Coordinating Authority as well as to all of you - our implementing partners and beneficiaries for the strong support and excellent collaboration during the first year of the CPAP implementation. We look forward to a continuation of our fruitful partnership in 2008 and would like to assure you of our strong commitment to providing assistance to the government and people of The Gambia towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

I thank you for your kind attention.